

Senator Luchini, Representative Schneck and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, my name is Greg Dugal and I am here today representing Hospitality Maine, which was formerly the Maine Restaurant Association and Maine Innkeepers Association, to speak in favor of LD's 553, 1348 and 1515. In May of last year, the Supreme Court struck down a 1992 federal law that effectively banned commercial sports betting in most states. Sports wagering has been legalized in the states through this judicial interpretation of Federal law, so we as an organization, would hope that there would be a way for Maine's business community, specifically the hospitality industry, to benefit from this outcome.

We have several members either with off-track betting licenses or willing to get such a license to be able to operate a sports wagering facility within their current structures or by expanding to meet the needs of this new business venture. It will help stimulate business on many fronts as customers may be more inclined to stay longer at that facility and have a meal or a cold Maine craft brew while they wait for the outcome of the sporting event. It will also stimulate hiring as the position of sports wagering attendant or cashier will be born here in Maine.

The revenue stream generated by the percentage of funds going back to the state and potentially local communities will help many underfunded projects and potentially assist with infrastructure needs and could perhaps be a better funding source for community projects than a local options tax, which we have been in opposition to. Increased funding for education, the harness racing industry and for track infrastructure is also a bonus derived from these newly found revenues. So it is with these thoughts in mind that we would encourage the committee to support some version of sports wagering that could benefit all Maine residents and businesses. Thank you for your consideration of this request and I would be happy to assist in any way on this bill.